

SUN EXPOSURE and TREATING A SUNBURN

Tanned skin is damaged skin. Having a “base tan” doesn’t provide any added protection from the sun. It’s better to skip the base tan and simply use sun protection when you’re outdoors. There is no safe level of ultraviolet radiation (UV) exposure. Protect yourself from UV exposure outside by using a multilayered approach with sunscreen and wearing protective clothing, sunglasses, and hats.

Intermittent sunburn is the main cause of basal cell, squamous cell carcinomas and melanoma. You can get photo-aged damage long before you get pink or sunburned. Over-exposure early in life may lead to skin cancers later in life.

SUNSCREENS: work by absorbing, reflecting or scattering the sun’s rays on the skin and are not meant to allow you to spend more time in the sun than you would otherwise

- SPF Number: ratio of minimal UV dose required to produce redness with and without a sunscreen
- Broad Spectrum: sunscreens reflect both UVA and UVB rays. They do a better job of protecting skin
- Expiration dates: check for a date, but if one is not visible, shelf life is no greater than 3 years.
- Cosmetics and lip protectors must be 15 SPF to be protective.
- The average user of sunscreen tends to use significantly less than the amount required to achieve the SPF listed on the container. One ounce (approximately a palm full) is needed for complete coverage.
- Sunscreens work immediately upon application. The reason to apply 15 minutes early is to allow absorption so less likely to wash off.
- Increase exposure to the sun gradually, not more than 20 minutes at a time initially.
- Reapply sunscreen as needed after swimming, sweating or towel drying, and during peak sun hours. Use sunscreen even on cloudy days.
- Remember to apply sunscreen to the back of the neck, tops of your feet and tops of ears.
- Avoid the sun during the middle of the day, especially between 11 am and 3 pm when the atmosphere absorbs less of the harmful UV rays of sunlight than earlier or later in the day. Stay in the shade if possible.
- People with pale skin and/or red hair should take special care in the sun.
- **Remember that you can burn even when swimming or snorkeling, as well as at high altitudes, in the snow or at sea.**

Sun Protective Clothing – Offers another way to protect skin.

- Tighter weave
- Labeled with UPF value (the greater the number the more protection)
- Hats: should provide shade for head and neck and should have a brim all the way around. If wearing a baseball cap, put sunscreen on ears and the back of the neck.

Sunglasses

- Protect eyes from UV rays
- Protect tender skin around eyes
- Best if glasses block both UVA and UVB (most sold in US meet that standard)
- Wrap around glasses work best



Over-Exposure to the sun in a hot and humid climate can lead to heat exhaustion. Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest hours and make sure that you drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids to balance the loss of body fluids through perspiration. Be aware that alcohol consumption can make you dehydrated.

TREATING A SUNBURN

- Cool it. A cool shower or bath, or the application of towels soaked in cool water, can minimize damage to the sunburned skin and make you more comfortable, as can some over-the-counter lotions and anesthetic sprays for sunburns. Ordinary over-the-counter-medicines that reduce pain and inflammation, such as aspirin or ibuprofen, can help too.
- Protect the burn from more damage. Sun protection factor (SPF) 30 sunscreen—or, better yet, clothes—keeps the sun from wreaking more havoc on skin that has already been burned.
- Most sunburn's are first-degree burns: damage to the top layer of skin. These burns are painful but usually don't require medical attention. For a second-degree burn, however—a burn that blisters—the damage is deeper. You can still treat a small second-degree burn yourself by cooling and protecting it, but check with a health care provider about a blistering sunburn to a large area of your body.
- If you have blisters, don't break them open. Sometimes they open up by themselves, but it's a bad idea to open them up before their time because they can get infected. And if you've got blisters on an area that's likely to get rubbed and irritated a lot by your clothes, you might also want to cover the blisters with a padded bandage. Antibacterial cream may also be used on open blisters.